

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6771

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TANANARIVE 1925

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MA

SUBJECT: RETURN OF FOREIGN MINISTER RATSIRAKA

REF: TANANARIVE 1910

1. MADAGASCAR'S FONMIN DIDIER RATSIRAKA RETURNED TO TANANARIVE DEC 7 AFTER AN ABSENCE OF TWO MONTHS. BREAKING HIS VOW OF SILENCE, HE TALKED OPENLY AT AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE FOR FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL MONTHS. RATSIRAKA RECOUNTED HIS TRAVELS TO CUBA, FRANCE, SWEDEN, AND ALGERIA.

2. RATSIRAKA REPEATED HIS INTENTION TO INTRODUCE RESOLUTIONS ON INDIAN OCEAN TO HAVANA MEETING OF PERMANENT BUREAU OF NONALIGNED GROUP IN JANUARY (REFTEL). HE EMPHASIZED ALGERIAN SUPPORT FOR MALAGASY PROPOSAL. IN CUBA, RATSIRAKA STATED THAT HE HAD MET WITH CASTRO, PRESIDENT, AND FONMIN. THEIR DISCUSSIONS HAD CENTERED ON POSSIBLE FUTURE COOPERATION. NOTING PRESENCE OF SEVERAL MALAGASY STUDENTS IN CUBA SPECIALIZING IN SUGAR PRODUCTION, RATSIRAKA SAID THAT CUBAN OFFICIALS HAD INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT MORE MALAGASY STUDENTS.

3. CONCERNING SWEDEN, RATSIRAKA MENTIONED ONLY HIS VISIT
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TO NAVAL YARDS AT GOTEBORG AND CALL ON PRIME MINISTER

PALME.

4. RATSIRAKA'S COMMENT ON HIS TRIP TO FRANCE SEEMED TO ATTRACT MOST PRESS ATTENTION. HE STATED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES EVOLVING NORMALLY. FRENCH FORCES IN DIEGO SUAREZ WOULD LEAVE BY JUNE 1975 AND NEW COMPANY WAS BEING FORMED TO RUN DIEGO SHIPYARDS. ONLY FEW FRENCH TECHNICIANS WOULD REMAIN, RATSIRAKA ASSURED PRESS. ON SUBJECT OF FUTURE FRENCH ASSISTANCE, RATSIRAKA SAID THAT HE HAD MET WITH FRENCH FONOFF OFFICIAL HESSEL WHO HEADED "MISSION OF DIALOGUE" HERE LATE IN NOVEMBER. RATSIRAKA ADDED THAT HE HAD ALSO MET WITH FRENCH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND REPRESENTATIVES MINISTRIES OF FINANCE AND DEFENSE. RELATIONS WITH FRANCE NO LONGER POSED ANY MAJOR PROBLEM RATSIRAKA SAID.

5. ON DOMESTIC MATTERS RATSIRAKA DENIED THAT HIS FREQUENT TRIPS ABROAD WERE MANIFESTATIONS OF HIS DISINTEREST IN MADAGASCAR'S CURRENT DOMESTIC SITUATION. HE ALSO BRUSHED ASIDE RUMOR THAT HE WAS POLITICALLY AMBITIOUS, AND DENIED HE PLANS ENTER FUTURE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. SUCH RUMORS RATSIRAKA SAID WERE BEING SPREAD BY POLITICAL PARTIES WHO WERE EAGER TO COME TO POWER THEMSELVES. RATSIRAKA DENIED THAT HE HAD ORGANIZED POLITICAL MEETINGS WITH MALAGASY STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD. HE SAID THAT HE HAD MET WITH STUDENTS BUT HAD NOT BEEN IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS WITH THEM RUMORS OF COUP AND SABOTAGE THAT ARE CURRENT HERE.

6. EMBASSY COMMENT: RATSIRAKA-HESSEL MEETING IN PARIS SHOULD SERVE TO PUT TO REST LOCAL RUMORS THAT HESSEL MISSION VISITED HERE DURING RATSIRAKA'S ABSENCE TO CIRCUMVENT HIM. WHETHER THERE IS MUCH POLITICAL SUBSTANCE TO RATSIRAKA'S FLASHY RETURN TO BEING FRONT PAGE NEWS REMAINS TO BE SEEN. INCREASINGLY, MALAGASY DOMESTIC PROBLEMS LOOM LARGER.
ELFERS

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